

## Perfect Protein

Protein is an important nutrient for everyone, but it becomes even more important after weight-loss surgery when your calories are very low. To meet your protein needs when you are eating so little food, most of your food has to be from protein.

Proteins have many jobs, including making body tissue, brain chemicals, hormones, and immune cells and helping numerous other processes take place. If you do not eat enough protein after surgery, you will not heal as well, your energy levels will be lower, you will lose more muscle and less fat, and you may lose more hair.

### How Much Protein Do I Need After Surgery?

Your first protein goal is **a minimum of 60 to 80 grams per day for the first week after weight-loss surgery**. As you begin to recover from the surgery and can tolerate liquids better, your protein goal may be higher.

If you have certain health conditions, you may need to keep your protein intake within a certain range. Your health care provider will give you a range appropriate for you.

**My protein goal:** \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ grams per day

*Aim for enough protein, but do not go overboard! More is not always better, and you can consume too much.*

## Choosing a Protein Powder or Drink

Protein supplements will be important in helping you meet your protein needs. Initially, you will rely on protein supplements in the form of either powders or premade drinks. There are many supplements to choose from, and the selection can be overwhelming. Here are some essentials on picking a protein drink.

- Look for **whey protein isolate**, **soy protein isolate**, or **calcium caseinate** as the first ingredient. (Avoid collagen-based proteins!)
- Make sure the drink has less than 5 grams of sugar and less than 3 grams of fat per 100 calories.
- Choose a drink that has at least 20 grams of protein per 8 ounces.

## Ways to Sneak in Extra Protein

- Fortify your milk with nonfat dry milk (avoid this if you have lactose intolerance).
- Add an egg white to your egg.
- Add protein powder to your soup or hot cereal (stir it into lukewarm water or milk before adding to hot foods; it will mix better).
- Use yogurt or cottage cheese as a base for dips and dressings.

### Fighting Flavor Fatigue: Overcoming the “Ugh!” Factor

- Use sugar-free syrups or extracts to add flavor.
- Blend a teaspoon of smooth peanut butter or ¼ banana into your protein drink.
- Drink protein drinks very cold or blend them with ice.
- Make your drinks with fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk or unsweetened soy milk.
- Buy an unflavored protein drink and mix it with your soups or with sugar-free Kool-Aid or Crystal Light.
- Drink from a covered cup if the smell of your drink is unpleasant.

## Top-Notch Protein Foods

The foods listed here each have 7 grams of protein per serving. Use this guide to determine whether you are meeting your protein goal.

- 1 ounce meat, chicken, or fish
- ½ veggie burger
- 1 egg
- ¾ cup fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk
- ⅓ cup nonfat dry milk
- 6-ounce container yogurt
- ½ cup Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup low-fat or fat-free cottage cheese
- 1 string-cheese stick
- 3 ounces tofu
- ⅓ cup fat-free ricotta cheese
- ½ cup cooked dried peas or beans (split peas or black, pinto, navy, and similar beans)
- ⅓ cup edamame (fresh soybeans), hulled
- ½ ounce beef jerky

### Sample 1-Day Menu with 60 to 80 Grams of Protein

1 soft-scrambled egg  
8 ounces protein drink with fat-free (skim) milk  
¼ cup cottage cheese  
1 string-cheese stick  
2 ounces tuna  
6 ounces yogurt

# Protein Supplement Worksheet

My protein goal after weight-loss surgery is \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ grams each day

Protein drink: \_\_\_\_\_

The first ingredient is: \_\_\_\_\_

The amount of protein is: \_\_\_\_\_ grams mixed with \_\_\_\_\_ ounces of liquid (water or fat-free milk)

Does an 8-ounce serving of this protein drink have at least 20 grams of protein?

*or*

Does a 12-ounce serving of this drink have at least 30 grams of protein?

Yes  No

Does this drink have less than 5 grams of sugar per serving?  Yes  No

Does this drink have less than 3 grams of fat per serving?  Yes  No

Do I like the taste of this drink, and have I tried mixing it in different ways, using extracts and sugar-free syrups?  Yes  No

How much of this drink will I need to meet my protein goal? \_\_\_\_\_ ounces each day